

SPRING 2005

Debbie Regala

State Senator

27th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Olympia Office:

417 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40427
Olympia, WA 98504-0427
Phone: (360) 786-7652
E-mail: regala.debbie@leg.wa.gov
Toll-Free Legislative Hot Line:
(800) 562-6000
TTY (for hearing-impaired):
1-800-635-9993

Committees & Leadership:

Majority Whip

Vice Chair – Human Services
& Corrections

Ways & Means

Rules

Water, Energy & Environment

Other Appointments:

Joint Legislative Audit and
Review Committee (JLARC)

Legislative Ethics Board

Joint Committee on
Pension Policy

Washington Council for
Prevention of Child Abuse
and Neglect

Let's build a better Washington

Dear neighbors,

During this legislative session, I'm confronted with the question: How can we make this a better place for you to live, work and raise a family? How can we build a better Washington for our children and grandchildren?

The answer seems obvious:

- Better schools and universities
- Better health care
- A stronger safety net
- An improved justice system

After all, education must prepare our children to be successful in the future, both in higher education and workforce choices.

Our prosperity and the future of our state economy depend on the degree to which we invest in our schools, college and universities.

Our communities are healthier when our citizens' basic health, food and shelter needs are met.

And public safety and an effective criminal justice system are essential to the quality of life for every citizen in every community across the state.

The prescription for a better future couldn't be clearer.

At the same time, though, we must make up a \$2.2 billion revenue shortfall in our state budget.

Bridging that shortfall won't make improvements in the current system – it just pays for our current level of programs and services. And I hear from so many circles that the current level of programs and services just isn't enough.

Inside this newsletter, you'll find details about our budget situation and reforms to improve our school, higher education, health care, mental health and criminal justice systems.

I'm interested in what you think – please take a moment to complete the survey and return it to my office. I'm also interested in hearing your family's experiences with these or any other issues. If you share your story with me, I can put a human face on these issues as they are debated during this Legislative session.

You can contact me by phone, letter or e-mail. I read every message from citizens from the 27th District and make it a priority to respond as quickly as possible.

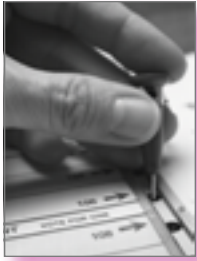
Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving you in the Legislature.

Sincerely yours,

Debbie Regala
State Senator
27th Legislative District

Election 2004: A clear need for reforms

What should happen when an election is this close and this contentious?



Clearly, we need to adopt comprehensive election reform in our state to prevent this sort of problem from occurring again. A great deal of work needs to be done to regain the confidence and trust of the voter.

With the help of Republican Secretary of State Sam Reed, the Legislature will be looking at a

host of election reform laws that will seek to make the process more streamlined and accurate. Additional reform proposals include moving the date of the primary and making the Secretary of State a non-partisan elected office.

The last few months have been trying times and I want to thank the voters for the patience they are showing as the process continues.

My take on the budget:

A structural problem

We've long known that the cost of many basic services is increasing at a much faster rate than inflation or growth. Over the last two budget biennia, the Legislature has made dramatic cuts to vital programs and services in order to offset skyrocketing costs and balance the budget.

Yet we continue to have a revenue shortfall.

This budget biennium marks the third in a row that our state will take in less revenue than the cost of existing programs and services – a difference currently estimated to be as high as \$2.2 billion. These revenues fund critical programs and services such as those that:

- Teach hundreds of thousands of Washington's students.
- Provide health care and critical mental health services for thousands of Washington's families.
- Keep Washington's families and communities safe.

These are programs and services that are critical to the citizens of our state. It's the cruelest of ironies that we are talking seriously about making further cuts to programs that are desperately in need of more funding – not less – if they are to remain viable.



Public schools: Class sizes are growing as resources available to school districts are shrinking. Recent findings show that Washington ranks 42nd out of 50 states in per-student funding. And more children will drop out of high school than will receive a

college degree, at a time when 88 percent of jobs require more than a high school education.

The financial constraints at our colleges and universities are causing them to turn away qualified applicants at the same time they should be planning to make room for an additional 30,000 high school graduates who will want to go to college by 2008-2009.

Health care: Costs are going up at unsustainable rates – four to five times the rate of inflation. These



costs have placed a huge burden upon our families, our businesses and our state pocketbook. As more and more people must choose between paying for their pills or their heating bill, the state budget

has also provided terrible choices. Since 2003, 62,000 children have been dropped from state-funded medical rolls. The crisis in health care is becoming deadly – literally.

Mental health: The acute lack of psychiatric hospital beds and inadequate resources for community-based care facilities means that we are sending people in need of care onto the streets, where they are a danger to themselves and also pose a public safety risk. The result is the mentally ill are forced into our criminal justice system, which is already strained.



Justice system: Our courts are overloaded, and trial timelines are stretched too long. We are losing proven and cost effective probation services, drug courts and family reunification courts, to name but a few – because local governments can no longer cover the burden of their costs.

We'll certainly get out of our budget mess – we always do. But the question is, at what cost? If we make more cuts this year, we'll just be papering over the real problem. Doing so may help us balance the budget this time, but it won't address the question of why we keep having revenue shortfalls. We'll just be back at it again next time, facing yet another shortfall, looking at more programs to cut.

Not only do I believe this will solve nothing, given the many crises I've just outlined, but I frankly believe that it will put our entire state at risk.

For the past few biennia, we've balanced our budget with one tool: a hacksaw. But it shouldn't be the only tool in our toolbox.

To build a better Washington, we really need a hammer and nails.

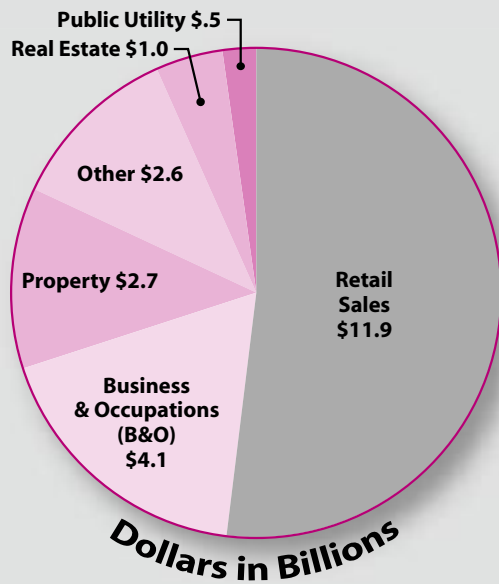
The hammer and nails in this equation includes new revenue, and I believe we've reached the point where there are major reasons for all of us to say that's exactly what we need.

27th District Session Survey

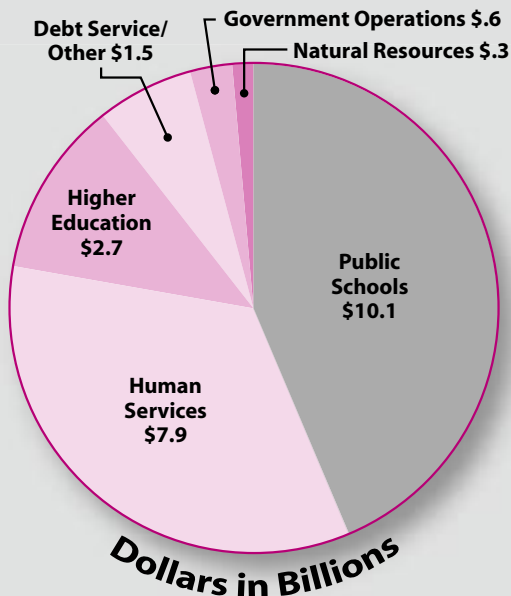
Budget

The State General Fund in the 2003-05 was \$22.8 billion.

These revenues came from:



These funds were spent on:



Questionnaire Instructions:

Record your responses by shading the entire circle of your answer using a blue or black pen. Record any additional comments in the area provided on the back page.

Shade circles like this: ●

Not like this: ☒

Or this: ☒

As you complete the following survey, please refer to the graphs to the left of this page.

Budget

- Unless new revenues are added, an increase in investment in one area requires an equivalent decrease in another. With this in mind, how would you rate funding for each of the following programs and services, on a five-point scale with 1 = should not be cut and 5 = should be cut?

| | Voter 1 | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A. Criminal justice/public safety..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| B. Access to higher education..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| C. Emergency and long-term mental health services..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| D. Health care for low-income families..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| E. K-12 education | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F. Environmental protection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| G. Social services | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other: _____

- In order to balance the budget, the Legislature should (choose as many as apply):

| | Voter 1 | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A. Increase existing revenues..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| B. Rely solely on program cuts and spending reductions..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| C. Repeal or amend initiatives that have eliminated state revenues..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| D. Repeal or amend school and/or health-care funding initiatives | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| E. Rescind or reduce corporate tax breaks | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F. Restructure our tax system | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| G. Use a combination of funding cuts and revenue increases | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other ideas for new revenue: _____

3. The Legislature also will be asked to make additional investments for the future. How would you rate each of the following programs and projects, on a five-point scale with 1 = should be funded and 5 = should not be funded?

| | Voter 1 | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A. I-728 for smaller class sizes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| B. I-732 for teacher cost of living allowances (COLAs) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| C. Additional higher education enrollments | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| D. Assistance to local government for criminal justice costs, ... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| E. Greater resources for our mental health care hospitals and community-based facilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F. State workers' collective bargaining agreement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other: _____

Public schools

1. We are mandated to make K-12 education our top priority, and in today's economy, education is the foundation for prosperity and the future of our children and our state. Indicate how you rate each of the following, on a five-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important.

| | Voter 1 | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A. Change the education levy threshold from a super majority to a simple majority | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| B. Conduct the first study of our education funding system's needs since 1977 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| C. Decrease local funding burden by increasing the contribution from the state | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| D. Develop an education master plan from pre-kindergarten through university | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| E. Increase extra assistance for struggling students | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F. Provide better compensation for teachers and staff | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| G. Reduce class sizes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| H. Remove the graduation requirement from the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) exam | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Higher Education

1. The Legislature appropriates funds to subsidize enrollments at our public colleges and universities, with students charged tuition to make up the gap in the cost of instruction. Which do you believe is most important? Select one.

| | Voter 1 | Voter 2 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Increase tuition to ensure quality of instruction | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| B. Keep tuition low and limit new enrollments | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| C. Increase state contribution for instructional costs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

2. How important is it to have publicly-funded colleges and universities, on a five-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important?

| Voter 1 | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3. How important is it to have a dedicated funding source (i.e., revenue earmarked exclusively) for our colleges and universities, on a five-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important?

| Voter 1 | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

(Survey Continued, Next Page)

Comments

Please contain your comments to ONLY this section. If this space isn't sufficient, please feel free to call, write or e-mail me.

1. We all know healthy children learn better and healthy workers work better. A healthy Washington is a strong Washington. This session, reform of our health care system is expected to be a top priority. Indicate how you rate each of the following, on a five-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important.

| | Voter 1 | | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| A. Permanently roll back the premium increases for children in the Medicaid program, which are scheduled to go into effect in July 2005 . . . | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| B. Require large businesses that do not provide health care to their employees to pay into a fund so their workers can get coverage (Washington Fair Share) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| C. Stabilize insurance rates for small businesses by creating a state-sponsored reinsurance system to cover all high expense claims | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| D. Expand the prescription drug program so businesses and workers can benefit from the state's purchasing clout | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| E. Pool prescription drug purchasing with other states | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| F. Health care purchasers – the state, and businesses large and small – should join forces to improve quality and reduce costs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| G. Expedite doctors' adoption of electronic medical records and other computer information technologies | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |

1. There are 300,000 mentally ill people in our state. This session, the Legislature faces many pressing challenges in how we deal with the issue of mental illness. Indicate how you rate each of the following, on a five-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important.



When you have completed your questionnaire, please fold up this document so my return address mail panel is visible, tape the open edge of the questionnaire and affix a first class stamp.

| | Voter 1 | | | | | | Voter 2 | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A. Increase the number of emergency psychiatric beds in community mental hospitals..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| B. Require all health plans to provide mental health services on the same basis as they do other health care services (mental health parity) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| C. Continue to move the long-term mentally ill into community-based rather than more expensive hospital care settings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| D. Expand access to services for children, who currently represent one in three people served | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| E. Increase funding for Medicaid clients and non-Medicaid clients in danger of being dropped from the community mental-health rolls ... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F. Invest in proven intervention and prevention treatment models for chemical dependency and mental illness..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

1. Washington ranks 50th in the nation in percentage of court costs paid for by the state. This has placed enormous strain on local governments, who currently fund 85% of trial court cost associated with prosecutors, public defense attorneys, judges and juries. Many local governments have been forced to make program cuts for budgetary reasons as a result. Indicate how you rate each of the following, on a five-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important.

[illegible]



Return mail panel. Tape top edge before mailing.



Place
First-Class
Postage
Here

Senator *Debbie Regala*
27th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

417 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40427
Olympia, WA 98504-0427



PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OLYMPIA, WA
PERMIT #133

Senator Debbie Regala
27th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
417 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40427
Olympia, WA 98504-0427

